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# Gene Autry

*in the*  
**LOST TOWNS**

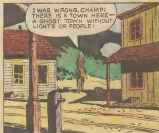
FIREWORKS—IN THIS  
BACK-OF-BEYOND COUNTRY!  
THERE ISN'T A TOWN IN  
FIFTY MILES!



THAT SURE BEARS  
INVESTIGATIN'!  
COME ON, CHAMP!



I WAS WRONG, CHAMP!  
THERE IS A TOWN HERE—  
A GHOST TOWN WITHOUT  
LIGHTS OR PEOPLE!



IT'S AS DEAD AS BABYLON!  
I WONDER...MAYBE WHAT  
LOOKED LIKE FIREWORKS  
WAS ONLY A SHOOTING  
STAR!



WHAT IN THUNDER?









BUT WHITEY IS PLUMB BRONCO AND  
DOESN'T AIM TO GIVE UP!



BELL! COME HERE! I RECKON  
YOU CROWED TOO SOON  
ABOUT CORNERING THAT  
BRONCO!



YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING  
TO LEAD YOUR HOSS IN  
THERE, GENE?

YES! WHERE ONE HOSS  
HAS BEEN, ANOTHER  
CAN FOLLOW!



THERE'S DAUGHT JUST A  
BISCUIT TOSS AHEAD!



WELL, HOW DID WHITEY  
GET OUT OF HERE?











HE'S AS WILD AS THOSE KIDS!  
WHAT D'YOU SUPPOSE WE'LL  
RUN INTO NEXT, GENE?

TROUBLE, I RECKON!



THE QUICKER WE TAKE WHITEY AND  
CLEAR OUT, BILL, THE LESS SMOKE  
WE'LL HAVE TO SMELL—  
THAT'S MY MUNCH!



YOU MEAN THERE'S MORE LOONY HALLWAYS  
UP THE CANYON CARVING FLINTLOCK  
PEASHOOTERS LIKE THIS? IT MUST  
BE A HUNDRED YEARS OLD!



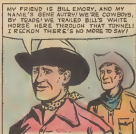
WITH WHITEY STILL WATCHING FOR HIS  
CHANCE TO ESCAPE, GENE AND BILL  
HEAD BACK DOWN THE CANYON.



BUT HARDLY IS THE CORDAL OUT OF  
SIGHT, WHEN OTHER HOOFBEATS  
ECHO FROM THE CLIFFS.

HERE'S THE TROUBLE I EXPECTED,  
BILL! BETTER MAKE SURE YOUR  
GUN IS HANDY!





I'LL FIGHT BISTER FURZFACE WITH BARE HANDS, KNIVES, OR PEASHOOTERS! HE INSULTED ME FIRST, GENE!

YOU'VE HAD YOUR FIGHT, BILL! I'LL HANDLE THIS ONE!



HERE'S MY GUN, JEDI! ELI CAN KEEP HIS! THE ONLY WEAPON I WANT IS MY ROPE!

A ROPE AGAINST A RIFLE—THAT'S SUICIDE! BUT YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE, AUTEY!



READY? THEN TURN AND RIDE AHEAD UNTIL I SAY STOP AND FIDE MY GUN!



GENE! FOR THE LIVIN' PETS! CALL OFF THIS FOOL STUNT! THAT HILBELY'LL KILL YOU SURE!

I'LL TAKE THAT CHANCE, BILL! RIDE BACK AND KEEP QUIET!



STOP! AND FIGHT IT OUT YOUR OWN WAY!











YOU'LL BE HEFTY SORRY FOR THAT, MARY LOU! YOU'LL ALL BE SORRY WHEN I GET THROUGH THIS FIGHT AINT ENDED YET!

THAT HONSIDER'S BLOOD HAS TURNED TO VINEGAR, GENE! YOU BETTER WATCH OUT FOR HIM!

SHUCKS! WE'LL NEVER SEE THE GENT AGAIN. GILL! GET YOUR HORSE AND LET'S RIDE!

I'D LIKE TO SHAKE YOUR HAND, AUTOY! YOU FIT FAID, AND MORE THAN FAID—EVEN IF ELU IS MY OWN KIN!

AND WE HOPE YOU-ALL WILL STAY WITH US!

THANK YOU, MA'AM!

WE FIELDSIDE'S LIVE JUST UP-CANYON A LITTLE WAY! COME ALONG! YOU CAN'T GET INTO THE TUNNEL NOW ANYMORE!

NOBODY FROM OUTSIDE HAS COME INTO THIS CANYON IN A HUNDRED YEARS!

A HUNDRED YEARS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MISTER??

IT'S A LONG TIME—AND A LONG STORY! WE'LL TELL YOU BEFORE YOU LEAVE—IF YOU CAN LEAVE!



JED FIELDING, YOUR HOSPITALITY AND MARY LOU'S SWELL COOKING HAVE SATISFIED OUR HUNGER, BUT OUR CURIOSITY IS GETTING WOOLSE EVERY MINUTE!

ABOUT WHY NOBODY HAS BEEN OUT OF THIS CANYON IN A HUNDRED YEARS? MAY YOU SUPPOSE YOU TELL THEM?

IT'S A STORY THAT GOES BACK TO THE BIG GOLD RUSH OF 1849, WHEN THOUSANDS OF FOLK HEADED WEST FOR CALIFORNIA!



THE FIELDINGS STARTED FROM VIRGINIA, AND THE DODDSONS FROM CAROLINA! ALONG ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL THE TWO WAGON TRAINS MET.



HOWDY! I'M JES FIELDING - HEADING FOR CALIFORNIA!

I'M JIM DODDSON - HEADING FOR THE SAME PLACE!, SUPPOSE WE TRAVEL TOGETHER?

IT WAS A WISE THING TO DO - WITH PAINTED INDIANS ALWAYS READY TO ATTACK.



THE TWO CAPTAINS JOINED COMPANY FOR THE JOURNEY.



"IN NEW MEXICO A BIG WILD PARTY  
JUMPED THE WAGON TRAIN THE  
INDIANS GOT THE WORD OF IT



"BUT THEY FOLLOWED OUR PEOPLE  
INTO THE CANYON COUNTRY  
SHOOTING WHENEVER THEY GOT  
A CHANCE



"TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THE  
SLIDE WAS KILLED, AND OUR  
FOLKS LOST THEIR WAY FOLLOW-  
ING A RIVER



"WE OUGHT TO HAVE  
TURNED BACK JED!

"TOO LATE, HARRAH! THE  
INDIANS WOULD MASSACRE  
US SOONER OR LATER!



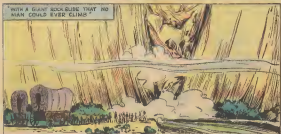
"BEYOND THE RIVER CAP ALL THE WAGONS  
GOT ASHORE!

"BUT THE INDIAN ENEMIES HAD ONE LAST TRICK TO PLAY"



"THEY PEELED LOOSE A GREAT BOULDER AND PLUGGED THE GAP."

"WITH A GIANT ROCK SLIDE THAT NO MAN COULD EVER CLIMB"



"SO THE WHOLE DOODSON—FIELDING WAGON TRAIN WAS SHUT IN THIS CANYON FOR GOOD!"

"UNTIL YOU TWO FOUND A WAY IN, BENE! NOW WE KNOW THERE'S A WAY OUT!"



"WE GOT ALONG ALL RIGHT—UNTIL FIFTY YEARS AGO WHEN A FEUD STARTED. THE DOODSONS HAVE WALLED OFF THE UPPER CANYON, BUT THERE'S STILL TOO MUCH SHOOTING BACK AND FORTH!"





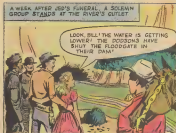








A WEEK AFTER JOE'S FUNERAL, A SOLENN GROUP STANDS AT THE RIVER'S OUTLET



LOOK, BILL! THE WATER IS GETTING LOWER! THE DOGDOGS HAVE SHUT THE FLOODGATE IN THEIR DAM!

MADY LOU, ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO RISK YOUR LIFE GOING INTO THAT RIVER TUNNEL?



I'M BILL EMORY'S WEDDED WIFE NOW, BROTHER TOM! I'M GOING WITH HIM AND GENE!

OKAY, BILL - MADY LOU! THE WATER IN THE BASIN IS JUST DEEP ENOUGH TO JUMP OUR HORSES INTO, AND LOW ENOUGH FOR US TO SWIM OUT!



I'LL GO FIRST!

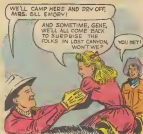


WE'RE OUTSIDE! BILL, WE'RE OUTSIDE!



WASN'T SO DISKY AS YOUR FOLKS THINK, MADY LOU!

WE'LL CAMP HERE AND DRY OFF, MRS. BILL EMORY!



AND SOMETIME, GENE, WE'LL ALL COME BACK TO SURPRISE THE FOLKS IN LOST CANYON, WON'T WE?

YOU BET!

# NOTHING'S EVER PERFECT

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"Help! Murder!"

At the ear-splitting scream, Sheriff Don Leigh dropped the telegram he was reading, leaped to his feet, and covered the space from his desk to the street in three steps. He shot a quick glance up the street, then down. In the doorway of the Roundtop Bank, an undersized figure was jumping up and down like a sun-blurred jack-in-the-box. On the run, Don cut across the street toward the bank. When a patch of shade suddenly wiped the blinding sun from his eyes, he was able to identify the small, bobbing man as Oliver Reddy, the bank cashier.

"What's up, Ollie?" Don came to a breathless halt in front of the agitated cashier.

"The bank! It's been robbed! And Mr. Gant—" Reddy swallowed convulsively.

"Murdered?" barked Don.

"No. Kidnaped! There's a note—" Reddy stopped; the sheriff was disappearing into the bank.

Don spotted the note almost immediately. It was tacked to the heavy door leading to the space back of the two cages—the space that housed the president's desk, the bank files, and the vault. The note's contents were printed in an uneven hand:

TO THE SHERIFF.

WE GOT GANT. DONT KUM  
AFTER US OR WE'LL PLUG HIM.  
WHEN WE'RE SAFE WE'LL LET HIM  
LOOSE. LARAMIE JOE.

"Well, Sheriff, are you gonna let those amery owlhoots get away with

that?"

Don turned and looked at the speaker. It was Tom Bennett, the storekeeper. Behind Bennett, the bank was filling with excited citizens.

"Reckon I've got no choice, Tom," Don said quietly. "I'd kinda hate to be the cause o' Waldo Gant gettin' murdered. . . If you can pull yourself together, Ollie," he said, not unkindly, "I'd like for you to come in back with me an' help check up on things."

Reddy came forward slowly, on unsteady feet. He held a key out to Don. "Here's the key to the partition door, Sheriff."

Don took the key and asked sharply, "Haven't you been in back yet?"

Reddy shook his head.

Don's eyes narrowed. "Then how do you know anything's been stolen?"

Reddy pointed at the bars of the nearest cage. "Look through there, Sheriff. You can see. . ."

Don peered through the indicated bars. Reddy was right. In a direct line with his eyes was the big door of the vault, hanging drunkenly on its hinges.

While Reddy hastily checked through the vault, Don examined its lock. To all appearances, it had been blown open. Not only were lock and hinges bent and twisted, but there were traces of black powder on the stone floor. He looked up. Reddy was coming out of the vault.

"As near as I can figure, Sheriff," said Reddy nervously, "all the cash assets are gone. About fifteen thousand dollars, I'd say."

A low tuneless whistle escaped Don's

lips. "Not a bad haul. You could have a lot of fun with that much cash, Ollie."

"M-Me?" Reddy's face grew whiter. "I d-don't know what you're talking about, Sheriff."

"Who, besides you, knows the combination of the vault?"

"Mr. Gant. Nobody else. But the combination wasn't used. You can see the black powder —"

A hubbub beyond the partition interrupted. Don opened the door. Waldo Gant was pushing out of the crowd. His left-hand coat pocket was torn and a fat red knee poked through a rip in his trousers.

"Come in here, Waldo," said Don.

The banker swayed through the door. Don closed it behind him and shoved forward a chair. Gant sank into it.

"I'm all in," he panted.

Don waited while the banker mopped his brow with a large bandanna. Then he said quietly, "Start talkin', Waldo."

Gant settled back in his chair. "Well, last night I worked pretty late—it was around ten, I'd say. As I was leaving—before I could close the door—three men ran up and grabbed me, threw a gun on me, and forced me back into the bank. They tried to make me open the vault, and when I insisted I didn't know the combination, they blew it. Then the leader—he was Laramie Joe—"

"You're sure it was Laramie Joe?" interrupted Don.

Gant nodded. "I know the varmint, and I saw him as plain as I'm seeing you." He paused. When Don said nothing, he continued, "Joe said they'd take me along for a hostage; so they tied me on a horse and we headed south."

"Over Alkali Flats?"

"Right across them. On the other side they let me go. And that's all, Sheriff—except that here I am."

"So I see," said Don. He walked to a hook by Reddy's cage and took down a whisk broom. Then he went back to Gant. "Stand up, Waldo, an' give me your coat."

Frowning, the banker obeyed. When Don began to brush the coat vigorously, Gant's frown deepened. "What's the big idea?"

Don stopped brushing, bent over and stared at the floor. Straightening, he dropped the whisk broom and reached for his gun. "The idea is, he said slowly, "that I'm arrestin' you for robbin' your own bank, Waldo Gant. You opened the vault with the combination, then used a smitch o' black powder to twist up the hinges an' lock so's it'd look like the door'd been blown. Reckon a good, thorough search o' your house'll turn up the missin' cash."

"You're crazy!" yelled Gant.

Don shook his head. "Not quite. You see, Waldo, if you'd ridden across Alkali Flats, some o' the white alkali dust woulda settled in your clothes. There's nary a speck! I'm bettin' you spent the night right here in town." He slipped the handcuffs over the banker's wrists. "The thing that made me suspicious o' your story was the fact that, when Ollie gave the alarm, I was readin' a telegram from the sheriff in Coyote Creek. Laramie Joe was killed there early last night—in a barroom brawl."

Gant was muttering to himself "And I thought I had it perfect."

"Shucks, Waldo," grinned Don, "don't you know nothin's ever perfect—'specially a crime?"



# LUCKY HUNCH

ONE DAY, AT ROUNDOUT TIME  
ON THE U-BAD-C RANCH,  
LACE SIDDON, "SHARPIE"  
CATTLE BUYER, RIDES IN.

NICE LOOKIN'  
BEEF! YOU GOT  
THERE, CALHOUN!  
I'LL GIVE YOU  
FIVE THOUSAND  
DOLLARS FOR  
THE LOT!  
RIGHT NOW!

YOU'RE LOOS'  
SIDDON!  
THIS HERD  
WILL FETCH  
TWICE THAT  
IN KANSAS  
CITY!



PROVIDIN' YOU CAN GIT  
'EM UP THERE! IT'S A  
LONG HAUL AN' MIGHTY  
DANGEROUS! BETTER  
SELL NOW AT MY PRICE!

I DON'T  
NEED TO  
SELL AT  
YOUR PRICE,  
SIDDON!  
MY BEEF'LL  
GO THROUGH  
OKAY!



DON'T BE TOO SURE,  
CALHOUN! WHEN I  
WANT SOMETHIN', I  
USUALLY GIT IT!  
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!

WHY YOU  
LOW-DOWN  
VAMPIRE!  
THREATENIN'  
ME! GIT OFFA  
THIS RANGE,  
PRONTO!



I AIN'T TAKIN'  
ORDERS FROM  
YOU, YOU OLD  
SALOOT!



HEY...?!

THEN MAYBE  
YOU'RE TAKIN'  
'EM FROM ME!





LATER, IN TOWN...

"I'M SORRY, CALHOUN,  
WE HAVN'T GOT A  
CATTLE CAR AVAILABLE  
FOR A MONTH!

"BUT, HARMON, I'LL HAPTA  
SELL MY HERD AFORE  
THEN, OR I'LL LOSE  
THOUSANDS O' DOLLARS!

"I CAN'T HOLD  
IT, CALHOUN!  
TH' CARS ARE  
CONTRACTED  
FOR!

"WHO'S GOT TH'  
CONTACT? MAYBE  
I CAN BUY IT  
FROM HIM!

"RECKON IT WON'T HURT  
TO ASK! THAT'S HIM  
A-PULLIN' IN NOW!

"LAFE SIDDON  
AN' BRONC  
DAWSON!  
I MIGHTA  
KNOWED!

"LOOKS LIKE  
SIDDON'S BLUMB  
OUTSMARTED US  
THIS TIME, BOSS!

"HOWDY, HARMON! I'LL  
BE USIN' SIX O' THEM  
CATTLE CARS TOMORROW!  
JUST BOUGHT BLAINE'S  
CIRCLE-Y HERD!

"WOULDN'T  
'CHEATED'  
BLAINE OUT  
OF IT BE  
NEADED TH' TRUTH,  
SIDDON?





